

# Environmentally- Responsible Conferences & Events



Conferences and events can generate vast amounts of wastes. For an environmentally-responsible group, this can be embarrassing to the conference sponsors and organizers, and can literally have a negative impact on an otherwise exciting event. These groups will appreciate a facility's commitment to the environment and its willingness to provide extraordinary customer service. Advertising of these services could prove to be a significant market edge for your facility! Best of all, these things are easy; and you are likely doing many of these.

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## Before the Conference...

- **Conference information** should be provided electronically via e-mail or Internet site.
- **Recycled content paper** that contains at least 30% post consumer material and is not chlorine bleached should be used for all publications.
- **Contract with printers** who utilize pollution prevention techniques (e.g., less hazardous inks, energy-efficient equipment, and waste reducing practices).
- **Paper products** used by the supplier (writing paper, toilet paper, and tissues) have not been bleached with chlorine and contain at least 30% post-consumer content.
- Accurate **attendance** to service providers will reduce waste in conference activities.
- Suppliers use environmentally preferable **cleaners** with attributes that are biodegradable, reduce volatile emissions, and are available in reduced, recycled, and recyclable packaging.
- **Electronic registration and check-out** by the hotel saves paper and energy.
- Choose facilities that **reduce transportation** requirements due to proximity to airport, local and public transit, or activities associated with conference.
- Provide participants with information on **public transportation**; or provide participants with "tokens" to encourage the use of public transportation.
- Ensure that a **training** program is in place to inform the workers of the facility's "greening" policies.
- Incorporate requirements for environmentally preferable products into **contracts with suppliers** of conference materials.
- Utilize **reusable crates or cartons** when transporting supplies to reduce packaging materials.
- **Hotel information** can be provided to guests electronically or at least using double-sided copying.

## The Facility...

- The hotel's **laundry service** delivers dry cleaning in reusable bags made with recycled material.
- The hotel may have a policy or program that encourages guests to take home or donate **used/unused toiletries**.
- **Optional towel and linen service** for guests who stay more than one night; and staff should be properly instructed.
- Encourage the use of **refillable dispensers** for toiletries (e.g., hand and shower soap,



shampoo, conditioner, hand lotion); or if facility provides toiletries in small quantities, encourage the facility to replace the containers only when they are empty or for a new guest.

- The use of **energy efficient lighting & low-mercury fluorescents** should be encouraged.
- Energy efficient and controlled **heating & air conditioning** saves energy and money.
- Publicly available **copiers** should have double-side copying option.

#### **Recycling...**

- Recycling for all recyclable materials should be available and collected in **meeting and guest rooms**. Determine if containers are provided in rooms to collect recyclable materials, including paper, plastic, glass, and aluminum. Collection bins conveniently located for other, less common materials.
- **Information** should be available to guests to explain what is collected.

#### **During the Conference...**

- **Clean-up crews** should be trained to recycle all recyclable materials from conferences, receptions, etc.
- Ensure **recycling areas** are well marked and displayed throughout the facility and are easily accessible.
- Restrooms are equipped with **air dryers** to reduce the use of paper towels.
- **Low-flow toilets and fixtures** save water.
- Reusable **serving containers and table cloths** should be used; avoid use of disposable cups.
- Ensure **reusable dishes, silverware, and napkins** are provided for conference participants.
- **Avoid use of boxed lunches** to reduce generation of waste materials.
- Provide **beverages and condiments in bulk** by offering them in pitchers or bulk dispensers.

#### **Post – Conference...**

- Assess program and identify potential **improvements** and suggestions.
- Provide **conference proceedings** electronically via e-mail, Internet site or on CD-ROM.

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For more information on “green” conferences & events or the *Virginia Green Lodging* program, contact:

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